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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 9834
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0986
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 010134

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2016

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SUBJECT: NEW, ENERGETIC LEADERS TAKE REINS OF MUHAMMADIYAH
YOUTH

Classified By: Political Officer Adam West for reason 1.4(D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The youth wing of Indonesia's second largest Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah, elected impressive new leaders eager to expand the group's social outreach efforts during a mid-July national congress. Muhammadiyah Youth (PM) Chairman Muhammad Izzul Muslimin and Secretary General Gunawan Hidayat outlined their group's activities against Islamic extremism, political advocacy on controversial topics such as the proposed anti-pornography legislation, and educational and economic development outreach. The new leadership tandem has an extensive history of involvement in Muhammadiyah and other nongovernmental organizations to on call as they lead one of Muhammadiyah's most influential constituent organizations over the next four years. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Muslimin and Hidayat met us on 25 July to discuss their goals for PM, especially their interest in publicly countering extremist ideology and maintaining PM's non-partisan involvement in politics. Muslimin's election marks him as a top-tier up-and-comer in Muhammadiyah as former PM chairman occupy important positions in the organization's hierarchy -- current Muhammadiyah chairman Din Syamsuddin was PM chairman from 1989 to 1993 and outgoing PM chairman Abdul Mu'ti now heads Muhammadiyah's vast educational network. Winning more than 60 percent of the vote in a crowded field of 15 candidates, Muslimin's victory also indicates considerable support for him within PM.

Staking Out a Clear Role

¶3. (C) Muslimin began the meeting by highlighting PM's rejection of Islamic extremism and militancy, a stance he often publicly shared in his previous position as PM secretary general. Muslimin said that as part of

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Muhammadiyah's attempts to bring extremists back into the mainstream, PM was engaging in dialogues with groups spreading extremist ideology such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). (Note: PM and HTI are competing over some of the same potential recruits on university campuses.) Unlike dialogue efforts conducted by Syamsuddin, PM has not been reaching out to groups that use violence, including the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). Muslimin's comments about the threat presented by extremists' ideology and often violent tactics suggests that he will continue making forward-leaning public statements, such as his calls for stern legal action against terrorists and condemnations of potential Muhammadiyah members' involvement in terrorism.

¶4. (SBU) Both Muslimin and Hidayat were keen to emphasize that Muhammadiyah writ large and PM as a constituent organization do not ally themselves with particular political parties, and often take independent stands on important political issues. They told us, however, that many PM members were active in a variety of political parties and that PM often helped interested members become active in non-partisan political advocacy. As an example of Muhammadiyah's political work, they said Muhammadiyah had submitted a proposal for the draft anti-pornography law through a Muhammadiyah member on the special committee writing the bill. Although PM has no official position on the bill, Muslimin said that he was in favor of new anti-pornography legislation but without the restrictive conditions' imposed by some anti-pornography zealots. Hidayat, for his part, steered clear of offering his thoughts on the anti-pornography legislation debate.

¶5. (SBU) The new leaders also underscored their intention to continue PM's traditional work of expanding educational opportunities and fostering economic development. Citing Muhammadiyah's history as an organization founded by businessmen, Muslimin said PM would continue to develop programs to teach small business management techniques and to expand access to microfinance institutions. Muslimin and Hidayat also said that PM puts a premium on training of members to serve in its educational, religious, and economic activities. Separately, former chairman Abdul Mu'ti told us he was concerned that some of PM's outreach efforts, such as disaster response, might suffer in the short-term as the new leadership found its footing. (Note: Mu'ti said PM sent members to Aceh after the December 2004 earthquake and tsunami, worked extensively in earthquake relief in

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Yogyakarta, and sent volunteers to Pangandaran, West Java

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following this month's earthquake and tsunami.)

Biographical Notes

¶6. (SBU) Izzul Muslimin rose in PM as one of its religious education specialists and served as PM Secretary General from 2002 to 2006. He is also a former chairman of Muhammadiyah's Junior Youth wing. Muslimin earned a degree in politics from Gadjah Mada University in Muhammadiyah's heartland of Yogyakarta after attending Muhammadiyah primary and secondary schools. Both of his parents are active Muhammadiyah members. Muslimin understands English, but prefers to use a translator.

¶7. (SBU) Gunawan Hidayat is a former chairman of the Muhammadiyah University Students Association in 2000 and ¶2001. He ran for the PM chairmanship as a representative from East Java, but received only 3.7 percent of the vote. Hidayat brings significant managerial expertise to the organization having previously served as national coordinator (2004-06) of the Peoples Voter Education Network, a confederation of more than 30 mostly religious, non-governmental organizations which conducted nation-wide voter education campaigns and election monitoring in the 2004 national elections and has continued its work with subsequent regional elections. He holds a master's degree in engineering and has served as a lecturer in mechanical engineering at Muhammadiyah University. He recently completed a three month visit to Australia for English language training and speaks very good, but heavily accented, English. PASCOE